THE RESPONDER
TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE • JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER
OIL SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM • SEPTEMBER 2013

When a Good Turbo Goes Bad

GLO personnel find the vessel still on fire.

On June 28, the recreational vessel *Wired*, owned and operated by Gerald Mathieu of Corpus Christi, caught fire while being driven to Rockport via the Lydia Ann Channel in Aransas Bay. Initially, the owner and a passenger were not aware the vessel was on fire. The owner was informed of the blaze by a passing Department of Homeland Security vessel that was out on routine patrol. After attempting to anchor the vessel on the edge of the Lydia Ann Channel, the owner was persuaded to beach it, thus keeping the channel open for passing traffic.

U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Jeff Ramos called Al Oswalt of the Texas General Land Office (GLO) to report the burning vessel. GLO Responders Al Oswalt and Joe Torres arrived on scene 2.5 hours later to find the vessel still ablaze.

The burning vessel is boomed pending removal.

After contacting the owner of the vessel, it was confirmed that the vessel had approximately 700 gallons of diesel on board.

A crane and slings are used to lift the vessel on to a waiting barge.

A very light sheen was observed, but the majority of the fuel was burning off as it boiled from the fuel tanks.

The vessel continued to smolder and burn overnight. By the next day, the fuel fire had burned out and no further pollution was evident. TowBoatUSA was hired by the owner's insurance company to initially boom and later remove the vessel.

Although the vessel had burned down to the waterline, the hull support structures were still intact several days later. The vessel was removed using a crane and slings placed under the vessel's hull to lift it onto a waiting barge.

The removal operation took approximately six hours. Ultimately, the cause was determined to be a new set of turbochargers installed on the diesel engines that malfunctioned and overheated, resulting in the fire and subsequent sinking of the vessel.

Well Blowout at Dutton Lake

Well blowout near Beach City in Chambers County.

On June 30, the Texas General Land Office received a report of a well blowout near Beach City in Chambers County, Texas. Initial reports had responders scrambling to respond to this well operated by Layton Energy. There were initial concerns about oil impacting the area which includes extremely sensitive marsh areas and wildlife habitats in Dutton Lake and NW Trinity Bay. Fortunately, due to the quick notification and response by local oil spill contractors and Wild Well Control, this event was contained and the well was promptly shut in. An estimated 252 gallons were discharged from the well.

A crew from Wild Well Control assessing the situation.

Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program

Monofilament is a strong, non-biodegradable plastic fishing line used on most traditional fishing reels and can last up to 600 years in the natural environment. Most fishing line ends up being snagged on rocks or just thrown away in the trash, which can still end up in the environment, making it hazardous to wildlife, boat props and humans alike. To address this issue, Texas Sea Grant sponsors the Texas Monofilament Recovery Program (MRRP). The goals of this statewide, volunteer-led program are to encourage recycling through a network of line recycling bins and drop-off locations and educate the public about the problems caused by monofilament line left in the environment.

The Texas General Land Office has been participating in the Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program for the past few years. In Cameron County, the GLO has placed recycling bins at Pompano Boat Ramp in Port Isabel, Adolf Thomae County Park in Arroyo City and the Jaime J. Zapata Memorial Boat Ramp in Brownsville. On a monthly basis, monofilament is removed and recorded for future analysis by Texas Sea Grant. When weight limits have been met, the collected monofilament is sent to Berkley Pure Fishing Company in Iowa to complete the recycling process. The recycled material will eventually be made into various fishing products, but will never become monofilament line again.

If you are interested in recycling your monofilament line you can contact Pure Fishing Company (Berkley) in Iowa. You can also take your line to other recycling locations located up and down the Texas coast. By recovering your line, volunteering your time, and participating in cleanup events, you can help make our coast safe and beautiful for the future.

Gonzalo Pena, Region 4 Response Officer, collects monofilament from a recycling location in the Brownsville area.

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Corpus Christi
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Corpus Christi, Texas
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361-825-3300

Brownsville
2145 EMS Lane
Brownsville, Texas
78521-2666
956-504-1417

Port Lavaca
414 Travis Street
Port Lavaca, Texas
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Report oil spills
1-800-832-8224
24 hours

The Responder is published by the Texas General Land Office. Questions and comments may be submitted to Angela Jarvis via email at angela.jarvis@glo.texas.gov or by phone at 281-470-6597.

Vessel Registration Requirements

Owners or operators of certain vessels operating in Texas coastal waters must submit vessel-specific information to the Texas General Land Office. The required information includes 24-hour contact information, vessel identification, gross tonnage, and capacity for fuel and oil for each vessel covered by the notification. Vessels operating in Texas coastal waters are still being found that have not submitted any of the information to the Land Office.

If you are uncertain if this rule applies to your company, you merely need to answer the following questions:

- Is your company the owner or operator of a vessel required by the Oil Pollution Act to have a current vessel response plan aboard?
- Is your company the owner or operator of a vessel in excess of 400 gross tons and required by the International Maritime Organization to have a current shipboard oil pollution emergency plan aboard?

If you answered "yes" to either of these, then the rule definitely applies to your company, assuming your vessel(s) operates in Texas coastal waters. The simplest way to meet the requirements is to submit the information and maintain it through our website at www.glo.texas.gov. To establish a company account and obtain a password, please contact Peggy Spies at peggy.spies@glo.texas.gov or by phone at 512-463-6554.

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act allows a civil penalty of not less than $100 and no more than $10,000 per violation for each day of violation, not to exceed $125,000. Vessel owners and operators are encouraged to review the registration and notification requirements to ensure they're in compliance. This year, the Land Office will use PortVision, a Web-based system for monitoring real-time vessel activity along Texas coastal waters to assist in determining commercial vessel compliance. Non-compliance could prompt a visit by Land Office personnel.

Media Day Success in Region 2

The Region 2 La Porte Field Office of the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program recently held its first Media Day to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the *Mega Borg* disaster and to establish a working relationship with the local news media. This event was designed to offer an opportunity to the local news media to tour the La Porte Field Office, with highlighted events that included a demonstration by Brian Cain and Michele Johnson of Wildlife Response Services, LLC and a guided boat tour of Cedar Bayou by Regional Director Richard Arnhart and Advanced Response Officer Gray Powell of the Region 2 Field Office.

Attendees watch a demonstration by Wildlife Response Services, LLC.

Deputy Commissioner Greg Pollock began the Media Day with a brief presentation on the history of the Oil Spill Program and provided photos of and information regarding significant spills from the past. Additionally, Region 2 personnel, along with Santana Rangel from the Region 4 Brownsville Field Office and Debbie Saenz from the Austin office were on hand to offer their expertise about the Oil Spill Program and answer questions for local photographers and reporters.

Region 2 Director Richard Arnhart discusses the boat tour and safety before launching.

The Media Day was a success, providing an opportunity for the news media to become familiar with personnel and equipment in the local field office, and establish an open line of communication to share information in the event of a significant spill event.

The Johnny Lee

On June 20, the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program was contacted by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department about an unknown spill drifting downriver near the Sabine Pass Port Authority Docks. Response Officer Jim Williams responded and found a diesel sheen about 100 yards wide coming from one of four gulf shrimp boats tied up at Kim's Daughter Docks. Regional Director J.T. Ewing also responded because there were numerous vessels to search and sample.

GLO personnel collecting the red dye diesel in five-gallon buckets.

Williams and Ewing responded to the vessel from which the spill appeared to originate and found red dye diesel fuel spilling from the port fuel vent onto the deck, and then overboard into the water. The responders attempted to find the owner of the vessel, and discovered the doors to the engine room were locked. Williams contacted the dock owner who successfully contacted the owner of the vessel *Johnny Lee*. The owner stated he had just topped off his fuel tanks and drove into town for groceries. Director Ewing and RO Williams used five-gallon buckets to capture the fuel as it came out of the fuel vent until the vessel owner arrived. They were on their third five-gallon bucket when the owner of the vessel arrived, unlocked the engine room door and shut off the crossover valve connecting the port and starboard tanks. The boat owner hired a crew to continue the cleanup of the vessel's deck and the remaining fuel in the water. This was just another day at the office for the Region 1 Oil Spill Division in Nederland.

Tampa to Host 2013 Clean Gulf Conference

Over 2,600 emergency responders are set to converge from November 12-14, 2013 in Tampa, Florida for the 23rd Annual CLEAN GULF Conference & Exhibition. Key professionals and decision makers from throughout the Gulf Coast and beyond will come together to view the latest products, services and technologies, as well as hear about the latest trends and developments in the oil spill prevention and response industry. Attendees will take away information that can help them safely produce and transport petroleum products and effectively respond when a spill occurs.

The CLEAN GULF conference features five tracks focused on Response, Prevention, Preparedness & Planning, Information & Response Technologies, Deepwater Prevention & Response, and Special Interests. The CLEAN GULF exhibit hall will feature 250+ service companies, OSROs, and regulatory agencies showcasing their latest solutions and technologies.

CLEAN GULF is co-hosted by the Texas General Land Office, Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and is in association with the U.S. Coast Guard and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. For more information, visit www.cleangulf.org or visit our website at glo.texas.gov/oilspill. Hope to see you there!

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson speaks at a recent Clean Gulf Conference.

Deepwater Well Containment Exercise Conducted

On the morning of April 30, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) kicked off an unannounced subsea well containment deployment exercise using the Helix Well Containment Group (HWCG LLC) Well Containment Plan, with Noble Energy acting as the operator and responsible party. Daniel Davis and Bruce Simons of the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program attended the exercise. The drill included the actual deployment of the Helix Energy Solutions Group (HESG) 10,000-psi capping stack onto a test stump adapted to the top of a suction pile—installed a few weeks earlier—in 5,062 feet of water in Block GC723 of the Gulf of Mexico. The capping stack is approximately 17 feet wide by 17 feet deep by 21 feet tall, and weighs 73 tons. It's designed to latch onto a subsea wellhead or blowout preventer of a well experiencing the uncontrolled release of well fluids, and to either isolate the well and stop the release, or serve as a controllable conduit through which wellbore fluids can be guided to the surface for collection and/or burned off as necessary.

The purpose of the exercise was to demonstrate the ability to deploy and test the functionality of the capping stack. Actual data from a nearby well was used to simulate response tactics utilizing the Well Containment Screening Tool. This resulted in the development of a shut-in sequence for the well while fully retaining well bore integrity throughout the well control process.

The deployment exercise was initiated as a phone call from BSEE to Noble Energy which implemented its Emergency Response Plan, through which it activated the Helix Fast Response System (HFRS) and mutual aid assistance by calling the HWCG call center. The notification advised of the required deployment of the capping stack from its storage location at Ingleside, and the simulated response of HESG's Q4000 and HP1 vessels. Once all players were on-site at the Ingleside location, onshore capping stack pre-testing protocols were executed while shoreside lifting and transport equipment was made ready to transport the capping stack quayside.

After approximately 12 hours of satisfactory pressure testing with BSEE inspectors in attendance, the capping stack was made deployment ready. This stage involved the lifting of the capping stack, removal of its test stump, and setting of the capping stack onto its support stand so a new pressure gasket could be installed in its connector. The capping stack was lifted onto its test (transport) stand and secured to the shipyard transporter for the short quayside trip to the waiting installation vessel. In addition, other containment support equipment was loaded aboard, including the capping stack's maintenance/workshop connex, test pump, support stand, spare control fluid, testing stump, nitrogen bottle rack, subsea pressure data acquisition equipment, and remotely operated vehicle (ROV) tool basket.

HWCG's 10,000-psi well capping stack being loaded for transport.

Preparations for transit were completed on May 2, but weather conditions delayed the vessel's departure. On the morning of May 4, the weather improved enough for a safe 36-hour transit. After arriving on-site in the late hours of May 5, the vessel waited until dawn for an acceptable sea state prior to commencing deployment operations. On the morning of May 6, the capping stack, accompanied by two ROVs, was lowered until the connector was over the wellhead. Then the connector was locked to the simulated well. The lifting slings were removed by ROVs, and the subsea pressure data acquisition was connected to the capping stack.

To simulate the operation to secure the well, the lower and upper blinds rams were closed, followed by functioning of the chokes and isolation of the side outlet valves. The operation was completed in conjunction with coordinated efforts simulating the assessment of the well's pressure integrity and flow parameters conducted by Noble Energy's multi-discipline team and BSEE personnel. This was followed by two pressure tests verifying the containment rating of the capping stack bore and its outlets.

Late in the evening that same day, capping stack testing was completed and all deployment objectives were officially accepted by BSEE personnel as having met or exceeded DOI requirements.

On the morning of May 7, the capping stack was retrieved to the surface and secured for transit back to Ingleside, where it was offloaded, configured for spill readiness mode, and satisfactorily tested. All parties involved in the deployment were extremely pleased with the response time and results of the exercise.

Partnering to Teach Environmental Science

On July 19, personnel from the Nederland Field Office of the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program partnered with Lamar University's Department of Earth and Space Sciences for the 16th year of Teaching Environmental Science. The program lasts for two weeks and includes participants from local industries, state and federal agencies, and environmental non-governmental organizations. The goal of the program is to introduce teachers from southeast Texas to local environmental issues through first-hand experiences.

During the program, the teachers explore and study environmental habitats in the Golden Triangle, including the Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center and the Big Thicket National Preserve. Regional Director J.T. Ewing presented a lecture on state laws regulating environmental coastal issues. Ross Penton, Regional Office Team Leader, gave an air boat ride in Bessie Heights Marsh to see a "beneficial use of dredge spoil area" and a marsh that had been impacted and recovered after a spill. Tyler Griffin, Regional Response Officer, also took teachers on a boat to see the industrial activity around Bessie Heights Marsh. At the end of the presentation the teachers were invited to a lunch of boiled shrimp with all the fixings cooked by Response Officer Johnny Porter and Ewing and then were treated to some delicious home-made ice cream.

This environmental teaching opportunity has provided participating teachers with knowledge and experiences that have been shared with approximately 150,000 Texas students.